



Direct Farm Sales of Food

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Results from the 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

167,009 U.S. farms ...

... sold \$8.7 billion in edible food directly to consumers, retailers, institutions, and local distributors.

Top States in Direct Farm Sales (\$ millions)

California	2,869
Michigan	459
New York	441
Pennsylvania	439
Wisconsin	431
Texas	357
Vermont	250
Massachusetts	229
Virginia	217
Iowa	194

About the Survey

The 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey was designed to collect data related to the marketing of foods directly from farm producers to consumers or retailers who then sell directly to consumers. The primary purpose of the Local Food Marketing Practices Survey was to produce benchmark statistics on the number of farms that market food directly, the value of these direct sales, and the marketing practices used in conjunction with direct sales. The survey was administered in all 50 states. For more information on the survey, go to www.agcensus.usda.gov

In 2015, farmers produced and sold \$8.7 billion of edible food commodities directly to consumers, retailers, institutions, and a variety of local food intermediaries such as distributors and wholesalers that market and sell locally branded products. Consumers accounted for 35 percent of these direct food sales, and retailers, 27 percent. (Table 1) Direct farm sales include both fresh foods and processed or value added products such as bottled milk, cheese, meat, jam, cider, wine, etc.

Table 1
Direct Farm Sales of Food, by Type of Buyer, 2015

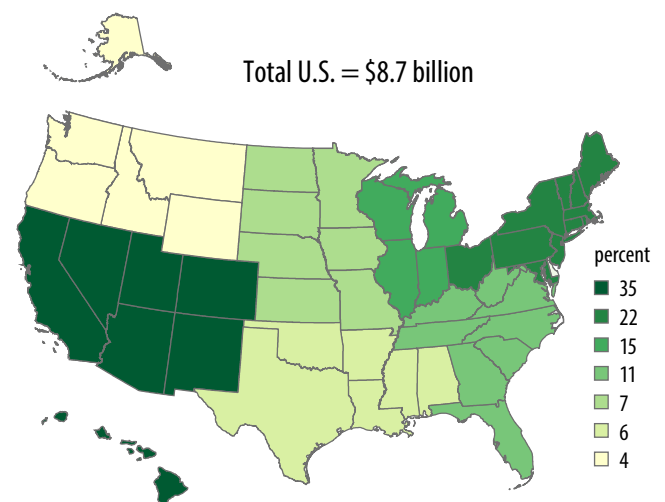
	\$ billion	%
Consumer	3.0	35
Retailer	2.4	27
Institution and local intermediary business	3.4	39
Total	8.7	100

Source: USDA NASS, 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey.

California, with \$2.9 billion in direct farm sales, accounted for 33 percent of the U.S. total. At the regional level, the seven-state southwestern region, of which California is part, had the largest share of direct sales (35 percent). Four of the top ten states in direct sales are among the 11 northeastern states that together accounted for 22 percent of the U.S. total. (Fig. 1)

California also leads the country in the number of farms selling food directly, with 14,315 farms selling fresh and processed food to consumers, retailers, institutions,

Fig. 1
Direct Farm Sales of Food by Regional Share, 2015



Source: USDA NASS, 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey.

Farms sell directly to:

Consumers (35 percent of direct sales in 2015)

Includes sales through farmers markets, onsite farm stores, roadside stands, CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) arrangements, online sales, pick-your-own operations, mobile markets, and other means.

Retailers (27 percent of direct sales in 2015)

Includes supermarkets, supercenters, restaurants, caterers, independent grocery stores, and food cooperatives.

Institutions and Intermediary Businesses (39 percent of direct sales in 2015)

Includes institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, and hospitals as well as intermediary businesses such as wholesalers, distributors, processors, etc., that market locally or regionally branded products.

and local intermediary businesses. Texas was the only other state with more than 10,000 farms selling directly. Regionally, the southeast and northeast had the most farms engaged in direct sales of food (32,516 and 30,297 farms, respectively).

Direct-to-Consumer Sales

Selling directly to consumers is the most popular form of direct marketing, done through a variety of channels by 69 percent of farms with direct sales. Of the \$3 billion in direct-to-consumer sales, on-farm stores and farmers' markets accounted for \$2 billion, or 67 percent. (Table 2)

Table 2
Direct Sales to Consumers, by Marketing Practice and Number of Farms, 2015

	Sales		No. of Farms
	\$ million	%	
On-farm store	1,322	44	51,422
Farmers' market	711	23	41,156
Roadside stand away from farm	236	8	14,959
Community-supported agriculture (CSA)	226	7	7,398
Online	172	6	9,460
Other (pick-your-own, mobile market, etc.)	360	12	39,765
Total	3,027	100	114,801*

*Is less than the sum of individual practices because a farm may use multiple practices.

Source: USDA NASS, 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey.

Fresh food products account for 53 percent of direct-to-consumer sales. California ranked first in direct sales to consumers, Pennsylvania ranked first in number of farms making such sales.

Other Direct Sales

There were 59,911 farms selling food to institutions and intermediary businesses, with the \$3.4 billion in sales almost evenly divided between food commodities and processed or value-added products. Fewer farms (23,624) sold directly to retailers than to individual consumers, institutions, or intermediaries; 64 percent of sales to retailers such as grocery stores and restaurants were fresh foods.

Top States: Direct-to-Consumer Sales, 2015 (\$ millions)

California	467
New York	237
Pennsylvania	224
Virginia	155
Massachusetts	136
North Carolina	134
Michigan	132
New Jersey	123
Missouri	108
Ohio	108

Direct Sales Primarily Urban-Centered

The majority (53 percent) of farms marketing food directly were located in metropolitan counties, and two thirds (67 percent) of direct food sales were from farms located in metropolitan counties. More than 80 percent of farms selling food directly sold all of their directly marketed food within a 100-mile radius of the farm.

Who Sells Directly?

About 300,000 persons were involved in making decisions for the farms that sold food directly in 2015. Of these, 62 percent were men, 38 percent were women – a higher proportion of women than among all farms, according to data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Three fourths (77 percent) of farmers who direct marketed were established farmers, having farmed ten or more years, and 14 percent were veterans. (Table 3)

Table 3
Characteristics of Farm Operators with Direct Sales of Food, 2015

	Farms w/ Direct Sales	All Farms (2012 Census)
Gender (male/female)	62/38	69/31
Primary occupation is farming (yes/no)	41/59	44/56
<35 years old (yes/no)	9/91	8/92
Years farming (<10/ 10+)	23/77	22/78
Veteran (yes/no)	14/86	n/a

Source: USDA NASS, 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey and (for All Farms data) 2012 Census of Agriculture.